

REPUBLICANS ON APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE VOTE DOWN HOMELAND SECURITY PACKAGE OFFERED BY REP. OBEY

On Wednesday, November 14, Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee voted down a \$7.1 billion Emergency Homeland Security package, offered by Rep. David Obey, Ranking Democrat on the Committee by a vote of 31 YEAS (29 D, 2 R) to 34 (33 R, 1 I). Only two of the committee's Republicans voted with the Democrats in favor of this critically important package (Reps. Walsh and Sweeney).

The Obey Emergency Homeland Security package was offered to the \$20 billion Supplemental Appropriations being marked up by the committee – supplemental appropriations that many independent analysts have agreed insufficiently funds a number of important homeland security needs.

The \$20 billion Supplemental Appropriations section, considered as an add-on to the FY 2002 DOD Appropriations bill, reflects very closely the Administration's request that was submitted to Congress on October 17. (This \$20 billion is the final \$20 billion of the \$40 billion emergency appropriations that Congress enacted back on September 14th – which required the final \$20 billion to be further acted upon by Congress. Much of the \$40 billion is being used for such purposes as paying for the military campaign in Afghanistan and aiding the New York and Pentagon recovery efforts.)

The Obey Homeland Security package would fund immediate and critical Homeland Security needs that are not adequately funded in the Republicans' supplemental package. Under the Obey package, additional funds are made available in eleven separate areas. These include upgrading federal, state and local public health capabilities to counter bioterrorism; efforts to keep nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists; upgrading our law enforcement capabilities; and improving the security of our ports, harbors, airports, and borders.

Many of the items in the Obey Homeland Security package can be implemented by agencies as soon as the money is available. The needs addressed in the package are critically-urgent needs – needs that should not wait to be addressed until the Spring Supplemental in 2002.

The Republican congressional leadership has attacked the \$7.1 Homeland Security package as being "fiscally irresponsible" at the same time that it has pushed through the House on a party-line vote \$100 billion in tax breaks for huge corporations and wealthy individuals. The Homeland Security package is less than 10% of the GOP tax cut bill, and would give the President the option to only spend the money if he deems it necessary during the year.

Some of the highlights of the \$7.1 billion Obey Homeland Security package include:

- **\$800 Million for State and Local Health Department Grants to Counter Bioterrorism** – The Obey package includes critically-important funds to upgrade state and local health department equipment, facilities and training so as to be better prepared for a bioterrorism attack. (The bipartisan National Governors Association had requested \$2 billion for this purpose.)
- **\$682 Million for R&D for New Vaccines and Antibiotics to Counter Bioterrorism** – Currently, NIH has only three level-4 labs to conduct R&D on responding to bioterrorism. These labs are stretched to capacity for new vaccine and anti-viral development. The money in the Obey package would go to building new labs and better funding programs targeted to new anti-pathogen drug development.
- **\$500 Million for Mail Sanitation Equipment** – The Postal Service estimates the cost of procuring and implementing equipment to cleanse the mail of bioagents at \$3 billion. The Obey package would provide the first installment for this key priority.
- **\$485 Million for Improved Security of Domestic Nuclear Weapons, Facilities and Waste Materials** – The Department of Energy requested much more money than the Administration included in its request for security in transporting nuclear material and protecting nuclear facilities and weapons. Additionally, the Department of Energy asked for more security at nuclear waste sites, where materials for a “dirty bomb” could be acquired. The Obey package would fully fund these Department of Energy’s requests.
- **\$221 Million for Improved Security of Vulnerable Nuclear Materials Abroad** – As *Washington Post* columnist David Broder has pointed out, the Nunn-Lugar program to assist Russia in securing its vulnerable nuclear materials and assuring that penniless Russian nuclear scientists do not assist terrorists is seriously underfunded. The Obey package would increase funding for these critical needs. Indeed, in an November 11th *New York Times* article, the International Atomic Energy Agency stated that there had been at least two terrorist attempts on Russian nuclear storage facilities in the past year.
- **\$325 Million for Increased Security at U.S. Military Installations** – With terrorist threats against U.S. military installations and a backlog of security needs at military installations at home and abroad, the Obey package would add substantial funding for blast walls, perimeter fortification and general hardening of military bases.
- **\$288 Million for Increased Sky Marshals** – Despite initial investment in Sky Marshals after the September 11th terrorist attacks, the percentage of flights that are covered by the Sky Marshal program is still low. The Obey package would substantially increase the number of Sky Marshals on U.S. flights.

- **\$239 Million for Food Safety** – Currently, the U.S. inspects less than 2% of all food that is imported. The Obey package includes \$239 million for expanded inspections by the Food and Drug Administration in order to bring this level up to 10% of all imported food.
- **\$200 Million for Assistance for FAA-Mandated Security Upgrades** – The FAA has mandated that airports adopt a number of immediate security upgrades, yet the current economic downturn and airline decline has left airports without the resources to comply. The Obey package would provide grants to these airports to help them more quickly comply with these important new FAA mandates.
- **\$200 Million for Grants for Rail and Bus Security** – Security experts have identified trains and buses as potential terrorist targets. The Obey package would provide \$200 million for grants for rail and bus security – giving states and localities full flexibility to improve security in ways they see fit.

Highlights of the Obey Homeland Security Package

PROTECTING AGAINST BIOTERRORISM

State and Local Health Department Grants

President: \$115 million

Obey add to the President: \$800 million

The bipartisan National Governors Association has requested more than \$2 billion to upgrade state and local health department equipment, facilities and training so as to be better prepared for a bioterrorism attack. The Public Health Service has also called for much more immediate investment. Obey's bill would move closer to that figure.

R&D For New Vaccines

President: \$50 million

Obey add to the President: \$682 million (\$115M for research, \$567M for labs)

Currently NIH has only 3 level 4 labs to research and experiment on the most deadly biological agents. These labs are stretched to capacity for new vaccine and anti-viral development. This money would go to building new labs and better funding programs targeted to new anti-pathogen drug development.

SECURING THE MAIL

Mail Sanitation Equipment

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$500 million

The Postal Service estimates the cost of procuring and implementing equipment to cleanse the mail of bioagents at \$3 billion. Obey's package would provide the first installment.

AIRPORT AND AIRLINE SECURITY

Assistance for FAA-Mandated Security Upgrades

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$200 million

The FAA has mandated that airports increase security personnell, yet the current economic downturn and airline decline has left airports without the resources to comply. The Obey package would provide grants for these airports to meet FAA standards.

Increased Sky Marshals

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$288 million

Despite initial sky marshal investment after September 11th, the percentage of flights that are covered are still very low. The Obey package would substantially increase the amount of sky marshals in the United States.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

FBI Computer Tracking System (Trilogy)

President: \$105 million

Obey add to the President: \$107 million

Under the Bush proposal, the FBI would complete the vital Trilogy system by 2004. The Obey package would bring the system online by this coming summer. Trilogy is seen as one of the key components in the war on terrorism.

FBI Cybersecurity

President: \$534 million

Obey add to the President: \$264 million

Cybersecurity is seen as the main way to close financial channels that terrorists use to fund their activities. Under the Obey package, the FBI's cybersecurity unit would be fully funded.

PREVENTING TERRORIST ACQUISITION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Improved Security of Domestic Nuclear Weapons, Facilities and Waste Material

President: \$114 million

Obey add to the President: \$485 million (\$428M for improved security at facilities/weapons, \$57M for security at nuclear waste sites).

The Department of Energy requested much more money than OMB provided for security in transporting nuclear material and protecting nuclear facilities and weapons. Additionally, DoE has asked for more security at nuclear waste sites, where materials for a "dirty bomb" could be acquired. The Obey package would fully fund these requests.

Improved Security of Vulnerable Nuclear Material Abroad

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$221 million (\$191M for securing Russian nuclear material, \$30 million to better fund program employing former Soviet nuclear scientists).

Under the headline "Lax Nuclear Security in Russia Cited as Way for bin Laden to Get Arms" the New York Times detailed just how vulnerable Russian nuclear assets are to terrorists. In the report, the International Atomic Energy Agency said that there had been at least two terrorist attempts on Russian nuclear storage facilities. While the President's package would not increase anti-proliferation efforts at all, the Obey package would make major investments.

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SECURITY

800 Customs Agents at Northern Border

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$145 million

Currently out of more than 120 entries into the U.S. from Canada, approximately 64 do not have full time security. Just last year, a suspected terrorist entered the U.S. from Canada at the Vermont crossing station with a New Years bombing plot. Customs has requested 800 new border agents. The President's proposal would add no funding for this request, while the Obey package would fully fund it.

Improved Visa Tracking

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$30 million

Most of the suspected September 11th terrorists had expired visas. Customs has indicated that better visa tracking would be an aid in tracking potential terrorists. The Obey package would fund machine readable visa systems at all U.S. Consulates.

PORT SECURITY

Coast Guard Expansion

President: \$203 million

Obey add to the President: \$166 million

Currently, of 400 ships a day that dock at U.S. ports, less than 10% are inspected for bombs, biochemicals or other weapons of mass destruction. The Obey package would fully fund the Coast Guard request for 640 new positions – the Bush package would only fund this request for 6 months.

Improved Cargo Inspection

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$147 million

While the President would not allocate funds for new Customs personnel, the Obey package would fulfill the request for 840 additional agents to inspect industrial cargo entering the country.

RAIL AND BUS SECURITY

Grants for Rail and Bus Security

President: \$30 million

Obey add to the President: \$200 million

Security experts have identified trains and busses as potential terrorist targets, and the Obey proposal would give states and localities full flexibility to improve security in ways they see fit.

FOOD AND WATER SAFETY

Expand FDA Inspections to Cover 10% of All Imported Food

President: \$61 million

Obey add to the President: \$239 million

Currently, the U.S. inspects less than 2% of all imported food. The Obey package would bring this level up to 10% - the President's would not.

SECURITY OF MILITARY AND GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

Increased Security at U.S. Military Installations

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$325 million

With a backlog of security needs at U.S. military installations at home and abroad, the Obey package would add substantial funding for blast walls, perimeter fortification and general hardening of military bases.

Increased Security at U.S. Overseas Facilities

President: \$0

Obey add to the President: \$158 million

The U.S. government continues to warn of potential terrorist threats on U.S. embassies overseas. After the attacks in Kenya and Tanzania, the Obey package would add substantial funding to this type of security, while the President's proposal would add no new funds.